

Special Education in Texas FAQ: Section Topics

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Considerations during COVID-19 Pandemic

There is no defined or correct method to adequately and equitably meet the needs of all students in an unprecedented event such as the current COVID 19 pandemic response. LEAs need to be flexible and consider employing a variety of delivery options as they make reasonable efforts to provide services to students with disabilities.

Above all, LEAs should prioritize health and safety of students, staff, and communities. LEAs should identify and acknowledge service delivery limitations, as well as the need for LEAs to make reasonable efforts to fully implement a student's IEP once school resumes. This requirement to "make every effort..." does not allow a LEAs to decline all services to students with an IEP and only offer compensatory services at a later date. Below are a few considerations:

- As LEA leadership plans for educational services during school closures, they should consider, address, and communicate equity needs for students with disabilities, placed by the LEA in private facilities, those receiving preschool services, and those served in transition programs and home/hospital placements,
- LEAs should provide proactive and ongoing communication with parents and families of students with disabilities. LEAs should identify communication channels to and from parents and families and ensure there are real-time opportunities for questions and concerns to be responded to and needs addressed.
- LEAs who are applying temporary changes to locations, schedules, etc. should inform parents of the temporary nature and proceed with reasonable efforts in providing FAPE until permanent actions are determined.
- If there are unavoidable deviations from legally established timelines, LEAs should document in the student's folder all reasonable efforts made to follow timelines.
- LEAs should also consider ways to use distance technology to the extent possible to provide child find, hold initial and annual ARD committee meetings, and/or evaluation/eligibility

meetings, if the LEA members and parents are available but not able to attend in person. Continuing to complete ARD committee and evaluation/eligibility meetings will help decrease the workload when school resumes. If required members of the committee and/or parents are not available or believe their participation is impacted by the lack of an in-person meeting, LEAs should document the reason and complete the activity in a timely manner following the ending of school closures.

- When school resumes, ARD committees should address student-specific needs resulting from the closure. This might include discussions of compensatory education and extended school year (ESY) services made on a case-by-case basis. Any need for compensatory services related to school closure or inability to fully implement a student's IEP will be addressed by ARD committees after school closures end.
- LEAs may wish to create a template document that assists school staff in documenting decisions made, why timelines were exceeded, and documentation of participation in IEP development at ARD committee meetings through temporary alternate methods, such as email or notes. LEAs should **not** create a standard form that is not individualized and applied to all files and activities.
- In planning for school closure and the potential distance delivery of educational services (including special education and related services), LEA and school staff will want to prioritize decisions and actions based on health and safety first, communication with staff and families, and then consider requirements of IDEA and state law.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and the Provision of Services

1. Do Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have flexibility regarding the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students receiving special education services in times of emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic? *Posted March 20, 2020*

No. Neither state nor federal law provide flexibility to LEAs in times of emergency regarding their obligation to provide FAPE to students receiving special education services. If an LEA closes its schools because the functioning or delivery of educational services is disrupted and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, then an LEA would not be required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time. Once school resumes, the LEA must make every effort to provide special education and related services to the child in accordance with the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). In addition, the Annual Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee would be required to make an individualized determination as to whether compensatory services are needed to make up for any skills that may have been lost because of an extended school closure.

If schools are closed, but the LEA continues to provide educational opportunities to the general student population during the closure, the school must ensure that students with disabilities also have equal access to the same opportunities, including the provision of FAPE. The LEA must ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, each student with a disability can be provided the special education and related services identified in the student's IEP.

2. What are options for how LEAs provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities when a school goes to a digital/virtual learning platform for all students? [Posted March 20, 2020](#)

LEAs must ensure that students served by special education have access to the same or equitable learning platform as their peers. To the greatest extent possible, the LEA must provide the student with the services required by the student's IEP. If there are services, accommodations, and modifications required by the student's IEP that cannot be provide during this time, the student's ARD committee must determine which services it can provide to meet the student's needs (34 CFR 300.324(a)(4)).

Changes in services and accommodations may be made through the IEP amendment process. In many cases, instructional accommodations may be met in an online environment by providing additional supports, such as individualized telephone or video conferencing. LEAs should consider *how current accommodations and modifications are provided in a physical classroom setting (i.e. extra time, redirection, small group, among others) and what this would look like in a virtual environment.*

3. Is the LEA required to provide ancillary instructional, and/or related services when a school goes to a digital/virtual learning platform for all students? [Posted March 20, 2020](#)

Yes. If a student's IEP requires the provision of ancillary instructional, and/or related services, the LEA is responsible for providing these services. In many cases, services such as speech and language therapy or special education counseling may be able to be effectively provided in a virtual environment. LEAs should plan carefully to ensure that the services can be provided effectively and that the students in question are able to effectively access them. LEAs should also carefully consider any implications related to privacy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

In other cases, it may be necessary to provide services in face-to-face environments. If the provision of these services results in an effective change in placement for the student, the change will need to be decided upon by the ARD committee and documented appropriately in the student's IEP. LEAs should carefully consider implications for staffing and travel if ancillary instructional and/or related services providers would need to be physically available for students.

4. While LEAs are required to implement IEPs and provide FAPE, what if the LEA cannot fully implement the IEP during the current COVID 19 pandemic response? [Posted March 24, 2020](#)

If an LEA cannot provide services necessary for the provision of FAPE in either a face to face or virtual environment, the LEA should document carefully what services were not able to be provided to each individual student. This documentation must be detailed enough to enable the ARD committee to later make determinations regarding what compensatory services

need to be provided to individual students. LEAs should plan for effective communication with families regarding any services that cannot be provided during the COVID 19 pandemic response.

5. Can an LEA provide a learning environment at the school or designated site for students who cannot have their learning needs met virtually? *Posted April 7, 2020*

Our Special Education Task Force is considering whether students can be served in a non-virtual setting without violating any applicable governor orders or local shelter-in-place orders. Further guidance will be provided at a later time.

6. If an LEA remains open, or reopens its schools but a state or local emergency authority prohibits students with special health care needs from returning to school for a specified period of time, what is the LEA's obligation for its students who receive special education services who are impacted by the prohibition? *Posted March 24, 2020*

An LEA subject to such a prohibition is nevertheless required to provide FAPE to students with disabilities impacted by the prohibition. If the prohibition from returning to school is an emergency measure not to exceed 10 consecutive school days, the LEA should provide virtual instruction or otherwise grant the student access to educational instruction as discussed above.

If the emergency directive will, or is anticipated to extend beyond 10 consecutive school days, in addition to providing virtual or other educational services, the ARD committee must meet to consider the need for a change in placement in accordance with 34 CFR 300.115 - 300.116, taking into account the heightened health and safety needs, criteria and considerations in determining whether a homebound, or other placement along the continuum of alternative placements is the appropriate placement for the student. [Refer to the OSEP guidance from March 12, 2020.](#)

7. Are LEAs required to continue services to students identified, and receiving services for dyslexia and currently being served by special education or under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973? *REVISED April 16, 2020*

Yes. As described in the March 12th, 2020 guidance from OSEP, LEAs must make reasonable efforts to provide FAPE to students **served by special education or served under section 504** even in extreme circumstances such as the current COVID 19 pandemic response. LEAs who are not able to provide the necessary level of services for any reason, should document carefully what should have been provided and was not to allow for effective decisions regarding compensatory services to be made by ARD committees and Section 504 teams when the situation gets back to normal.

As with any student receiving intervention services through a student support team or other general education intervention program, LEAs should carefully consider the needs of students

receiving interventions for dyslexia outside of special education or Section 504 when planning to move to virtual or other non-traditional models during the COVID 19 pandemic response.

On [April 9th, 2020, Governor Abbott waived restrictions](#) related to teletherapy for dyslexia therapists holding licensure through the Texas Department of Licensure and Regulation (TDLR). Therefore, LEAs should be advised that there are no state or federal requirements that preclude the provision of dyslexia services to students in a virtual environment. While the [2018 Dyslexia Handbook](#) indicates that computer programs should not be used as the primary method of delivery for dyslexia instruction, dyslexia services or therapy delivered by appropriately trained staff in a virtual classroom environment are not “computer programs.”

8. Should LEAs continue to provide services, or conduct evaluation activities during mandatory school closures or shelter in place orders? [Posted March 26, 2020](#)

LEAs should comply with all statewide or local orders. This includes but is not limited to school closures and shelter in place orders. As with all decisions made during the COVID 19 pandemic response, school staff will want to prioritize actions based on health and safety first, communication with staff and families, and then consider requirements of IDEA and state law regarding special education.

9. Should LEAs continue to provide services to students served by special education who are already receiving homebound services due to a significant health concern? [Posted March 26, 2020](#)

LEAs should prioritize the health and safety of students, staff, and communities in all decisions regarding service provision. As with all other situations, there may be options available to provide instructional and related services to students receiving homebound services leveraging technology and other more non-traditional methods. Reasonable efforts should be made to provide students with FAPE and LEAs should carefully document what was not able to be provided during the COVID 19 pandemic response. This documentation must be detailed enough to enable the ARD committee to later make determinations regarding what compensatory services need to be provided to individual students. LEAs should plan for effective communication with families regarding any services that cannot be provided during the COVID 19 pandemic response.

Evaluations

1. Are LEAs still held to timeline requirements regarding Full and Individual Initial Evaluations (FIIIE) in light of potential changes to school calendars and schedules due to the COVID-19 pandemic? [Posted March 20, 2020](#)

Yes. Please refer to the School Finance FAQ, listed under Waivers & Funding, on the [TEA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Support and Guidance website](#). In situations in which LEAs are “Closed, Preparing” or “Closed, Temporary,” state evaluation timelines halt as these timelines are based on school days. In situations in which LEAs are “Closed, instructing” or “Open,” the 45 school-day timeline requirements of Texas Education Code sec. 29.004 apply.

On March 16th, 2020 the United States Department of Education (ED), Office for Civil Rights (OCR) [published a fact sheet](#) acknowledging that evaluations might be delayed due to issues related to the current COVID 19 pandemic. However, there has been no communication from ED, as of the publication of this document, indicating that the required timelines have been waived for purposes of compliance reporting.

2. What if a student's triennial evaluation date is not met due COVID 19 pandemic response related issues? *Posted March 24, 2020*

LEAs should proceed with completing reevaluations within timelines. Missed triennial evaluations should be completed as soon as possible. If there are deviations from legally established timelines, LEAs should document in the student's folder all reasonable efforts made to follow timelines.

3. What if early childhood transition services and timelines have been affected due COVID 19 pandemic response related issues? *Posted April 9, 2020*

School closure dates are not applicable for Part C ECI to Part B IDEA evaluation timelines, and LEAs should make reasonable efforts to complete evaluations and develop an IEP by the child's 3rd birthday. LEAs should make reasonable efforts to implement the IEP and provide special education services under Part B IDEA beginning at age 3, so as not to delay provision of services and FAPE if the student is determined eligible.

If there are deviations from legally established timelines, LEAs should communicate with families, and document in the student's folder all reasonable efforts made to follow timelines.

4. What are LEAs' responsibilities regarding IDEA Child Find requirements during the COVID 19 pandemic response and associated school closures? *Posted April 7, 2020*

An LEA's responsibility to identify, locate, and evaluate students who have or may be suspected of having a disability and need for special education is ongoing. However, as explained elsewhere in this document, federal, state, and/or local health and safety orders or recommendations may temporarily prevent an LEA from conducting or completing an initial evaluation. Times in which the LEA is "Open" or "Closed-Instructing" as described in the **School Finance FAQ** located on the [TEA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Support & Guidance webpage](#), under Waivers & Funding. LEAs should consider updating information on their website regarding contact information and processes for child find during the COVID 19 pandemic response.

For more information regarding evaluating students during the COVID 19 pandemic response, please see [Evaluation Considerations During COVID 19](#).

5. **With Governor Abbott's Stay at Home order expiring, does that mean LEAs can start performing face to face evaluations next week?** [Posted May 5, 2020](#)

No. Governor Abbott's April 27 order does not change statewide school closure requirements.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committees

1. **What flexibility do LEAs have in the process required to adjust an individual student's existing IEP in times of emergencies such as the COVID 19 pandemic?** [Posted March 20, 2020](#)

If it is determined that an IEP needs to be changed or adjusted, LEAs should continue to follow local policies. The ARD committee may meet by teleconference or other means (if all members are able) to determine if some, or all, of the identified services can be provided through alternate or additional methods. Once the school reopens, the ARD committee must determine whether, and to what extent, compensatory services are needed. As stated in A1, if an LEA is providing educational opportunities to the general student population, the LEA is also required to provide the services and accommodations needed for students with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to participate in the virtual model of delivery.

School boards might consider reviewing their local policies regarding the allowable process to amend an IEP without convening the full ARD committee in specific circumstances (TASB EHBAB (LOCAL)). Changes to these policies could be enacted locally on a temporary basis as part of the current COVID 19 pandemic response to allow for a broader local application of the amendment process allowed by IDEA. Any specific change to local policy must still comply with federal and state law, and strong, timely communication with families regarding any such changes is imperative.

2. **Are LEAs still held to the 30 calendar day timeline requirements regarding initial eligibility determination, IEP, and placement decision ARD committee meetings upon completion of an FIIE in times of emergencies such as the COVID 19 pandemic?** [Posted March 20, 2020](#)

Yes. Requirements related to the 30-calendar day timeline for initial eligibility determination, IEP, and placement decision ARD committee meetings still apply. The ARD committee may meet by teleconference or other means (if all members are able) when necessary, to meet this required timeline. If there are deviations from legally established timelines, LEAs should document in the student's folder all reasonable efforts made to follow timelines.

3. **What if a student's annual Admission Review and Dismissal (ARD) date is not met due to school closures or other COVID 19 pandemic response related issues?** [Posted March 24, 2020](#)

If there are deviations from legally established timelines, LEAs should document in the student's folder all reasonable efforts made to follow timelines.

4. **Should ARD committees move forward with special education eligibility decisions if an FIIE has not yet been completed due to concerns over the current COVID 19 pandemic response?** *Posted March 26, 2020*

No. Special education eligibility determinations for students should not be made without consideration of all relevant data points that would be provided in an FIIE. Eligibility decisions, and any subsequent IEP development decisions require consideration of all relevant data in order to ensure that sound decisions are made in the best interest of the student [34 CFR 300.306]. LEAs should continue to provide all appropriate general education interventions and supports to struggling students while they are going through the referral process and eligibility determinations are being made. To reiterate what is stated elsewhere in this document, LEA and school staff will want to prioritize decisions and actions based on health and safety first, communication with staff and families, and then consider requirements of IDEA and state law.

5. **If an FIIE cannot be completed because of issues related to the COVID 19 pandemic response, how should LEAs document services being offered in the meantime?** *Posted April 23, 2020*

Campuses should have teams that convene to discuss individual student progress in their respective intervention programs. General education interventions and services for students that are in the referral process but not yet determined eligible to receive special education services should be discussed, documented, and monitored by this group.

6. **Can HB 3 dyslexia funds be used to contract with dyslexia therapists to provide services to students virtually during the COVID 19 pandemic response?** *Posted April 23, 2020*

Yes. Up to 20% of an LEAs HB 3 dyslexia funds can be spent to contract with a private provider to provide supplemental academic services.

7. **How should LEAs handle situations in which families of students with disabilities are not responding to communications?** *Posted April 23, 2020*

LEAs should carefully document all communication with families including unsuccessful attempts on the part of the LEA to reach the family. LEAs should attempt to reach families using multiple communication channels if necessary, and in the method, and language most accessible to the individual family.

8. **How should LEAs respond to families who have indicated that they will not be able facilitate the distance learning options being offered by the LEA?** *Posted April 23, 2020*

LEAs should carefully document all communication with families including. In cases where families have indicated that they are not able to, or unwilling to, facilitate distance learning

options, LEAs should carefully consider whether practical barriers to participation have been removed to the extent possible. LEAs should maintain ongoing communication or attempts to communicate with all families throughout the COVID 19 pandemic response. Even in situations such as this, the LEA still maintains a responsibility to provide FAPE. ARD committees should convene once schools reopen to consider any need for compensatory, or additional, services.

9. Is a student receiving special education services required to complete an Individualized Graduation Committee (IGC) process, or does the ARD committee continue to make educational decisions, including decisions related to required performance on academic assessments and graduation? *Posted March 26, 2020*

A student receiving special education services is not subject to the requirements of an IGC. A student's ARD committee determines whether a student is required to achieve satisfactory performance on an EOC assessment and qualifications to graduate.

10. Are required timelines for manifestation determinations waived because of the current COVID 19 pandemic response? *Posted April 2, 2020*

No. All required timelines for manifestation determinations are still in effect. For calculating school days for these timelines, LEAs should refer to the School Finance FAQ, listed under Waivers & Funding, on the [TEA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Support and Guidance website](#). In situations in which LEAs are "Closed, Preparing" or "Closed, Temporary," manifestation determination timelines halt. In situations in which LEAs are "Closed, instructing" or "Open," manifestation determination school-day timeline requirements required by 34 CFR 300.530(e) apply. LEAs are reminded that required meetings can be held virtually if needed, provided that all required participants have access.

If there are deviations from legally established timelines, LEAs should communicate with families and document in the student's folder all reasonable efforts made to follow timelines.

11. What if a student transferred into the LEA immediately before school closure and was identified as eligible to receive special education services, but no records were received from the previous LEA? *Posted April 7, 2020*

As a general rule, the LEA in which the student was previously enrolled must furnish the new school district with a copy of the student's records, including special education records, not later than the 10th working day after receiving the request for records. If sufficient records are not available in the Texas Records Exchange (TREx) system and if the student's family cannot provide the school with a copy of the most recent IEP, the LEA should collaborate with the family to determine what services can be provided to replicate what was in place before the transfer. In any case involving student transfer and a lag in record transfer, LEAs should communicate with families and make the best decisions possible with the information available to them. Additionally, LEAs should document all reasonable efforts to obtain records

as well as all reasonable efforts to provide a FAPE, including through the provision of commensurate services until such time as an appropriate transfer ARD committee meeting can take place.

New
5/7/2020

12. How should ARD committees approach transition services, such as Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) that are not able to be provide due to issues related the COVID-19 pandemic response? *NEW May 7, 2020*

ARD committees will need to review each student's situation individually and consider what alternative or additional transitional services could be provided so that students' goals for transition can be appropriately met.

New
5/7/2020

13. How should ARD committees proceed in making determinations about graduation for an individual student who received modified curriculum and was therefore graduating through the completion of activities related to graduation required by the IEP and who, due to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic response, has not completed all of those required activities? *NEW May 7, 2020*

The ARD committee has the authority to determine whether a student who received modified curriculum has successfully completed an IEP in order to graduate and be awarded a regular high school diploma. The student must also meet one of the conditions set out in 19 TAC sec. 89.1070(b)(2)(A)-(D) or (g)(4)(A)-(D). These conditions include:

- Consistent with the IEP, the student has obtained full-time employment, based on the student's abilities and local employment opportunities, in addition to mastering sufficient self-help skills to enable the student to maintain the employment without direct and ongoing educational support of the local school district.
- Consistent with the IEP, the student has demonstrated mastery of specific employability skills and self-help skills that do not require direct ongoing educational support of the local school district.
- The student has access to services that are not within the legal responsibility of public education or employment or educational options for which the student has been prepared by the academic program.
- The student no longer meets age eligibility requirements.

The ARD committee should review all relevant data to determine whether sufficient learning has been achieved with the services that were provided prior to school closure to constitute successful completion of the IEP. The ARD committee must also ensure that at least one of the conditions listed above has been met. If one or both of these requirements has not yet been met, the ARD committee would need to identify a way for the student to successfully complete the IEP and/or fulfill a required condition in order to meet the graduation requirement. In such a situation, the ARD committee must also make any necessary amendments to the transition or graduation plan in the IEP.

New
5/7/2020

14. How should ARD committees approach compensatory service provision for students who are graduating in the spring of 2020? *NEW May 7, 2020*

As a general rule, a student's eligibility to receive special education and related services ends when the student graduates with a regular high school diploma. Therefore, the LEA may not be required to provide compensatory services after graduation. However, the federal guidance requiring LEAs to consider a student's potential need for compensatory services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic response did not specifically exclude students who graduate in the spring of 2020 but who may have lost skill as a result of the LEA's inability to offer services during school closures. Therefore, in absence of additional federal guidelines, LEAs are encouraged to consult with local counsel if they are unsure how to proceed.

New
5/7/2020

15. If an ARD committee had begun the process of evaluating a student for exit from special education services prior to school closures, but is not able to complete the evaluation due to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic response, are they allowed to move forward with exiting a student without completing the evaluation? *NEW May 7, 2020*

No. Federal regulations [34 CFR sec. 300.305(e)] require the LEA to evaluate the student in accordance with IDEA's evaluation procedures before determining whether the student is no longer a student with a disability. Thus, the decisions to exit the student from special education services must be informed by a complete evaluation of all relevant areas of student performance. Once school resumes, the ARD committee may continue the evaluation process and make determinations about exit from services once all the relevant information has been collected.

General Questions

1. Are LEAs required to continue to support access to IDEA B non-ed funds during the current COVID 19 pandemic response and resulting school closures? *Posted March 26, 2020*

LEAs should continue to support access to appropriate non-ed funds to students for whom they are appropriate. For more information about non-ed funds, see the [TEA Q&A on Non-Ed Funds](#).

2. Will timelines or flexibilities be provided to LEAs reporting data for State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators? *Posted April 9, 2020*

These reporting and submission requirements will not be adjusted. LEAs are encouraged to keep detailed records concerning LEA closures and student absences. Detailed records regarding SPP 11 and 12 initial evaluation timelines and SPP 13 transition planning timelines may include but are not limited to LEA calendars/closures, student attendance records, Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) closures, comprehensive records of phone calls made or attempted, and copies of correspondence sent to/from parents or ECIs. LEAs can provide clarifications of any missed timelines through the data clarification process during the SPP data collection extension period in August 2020.

SPP 7 Entry and Exit reporting (using the state required Early Childhood Outcome Center's (ECO) Childhood Outcomes Summary (COS) Form) will be reported using the most recent information available by the LEA obtained either prior to any school closures or obtained during provision of educational services during school closures. LEAs are encouraged to keep detailed records regarding limitations to data and impacts especially on Exiting data outcomes from the COVID-19 related school closures.

3. Are licensures for evaluation, ancillary, and related service staff valid if evaluations or services are being conducted virtually? [Posted April 2, 2020](#)

In general, yes. For specific information related to licenses not issued by TEA, LEAs should check with the licensing agency. For TEA issued certification, all TEA issued certifications would remain valid in an online or other virtual environment.

4. Are local education agencies (LEAs) still subject to the IDEA resolution period timelines during the Covid-19 pandemic response, even if the campus is closed? [Updated April 2, 2020](#)

In the [March 21st Supplemental Fact Sheet](#), the U.S. Department of Education (ED) provided guidance stating that LEAs must convene a resolution meeting within 15 days of receiving notice of a due process complaint filed by a parent or guardian, unless the parties agree in writing to waive the meeting or to use mediation. 34 C.F.R. § 300.510(a). In addition, "[w]hile the IDEA identifies circumstances in which the 30-day resolution period can be adjusted, it does not prevent the parties from mutually agreeing to extend the timeline because of unavoidable delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic."

TEA interprets this guidance to require LEAs to convene a resolution meeting within 15 days of receiving notice of a request for a due process hearing, even if the campus is closed, unless one of the two exceptions identified above apply. The LEA and the parent may agree to conduct this meeting through alternate means, including videoconferencing or conference telephone calls. To the extent the LEA is unable to retrieve documents from a closed campus, it may choose to convene a resolution meeting through alternate means and work with the parent to continue the meeting at a later date upon which the LEA reasonably believes it may have access to the information it needs to conduct the meeting. The ED makes it clear that the parties may mutually agree to extend the resolution period beyond the 30-day timeline set forth in the regulations.

If an LEA is unable to convene a resolution meeting as set forth above, it should document all reasonable efforts made to meet this timeline.

5. Will TEA provide any flexibility in the April 30th, 2020 deadline for LEAs to assure their compliance with the requirements of SB 139? [Posted April 7, 2020](#)

Due to the prioritization of COVID 19 resource distribution across the state to address challenges created by the current pandemic response, the deadline for LEAs to assure their compliance with the requirements of Senate Bill 139 as described in the [February 13th, 2020 TAA “Senate Bill 139, Notice to Families”](#) has been extended. Each LEA must provide the agency with assurance no later than October 1, 2020 that it provided the notice required by TEC sec. 29.023 to the parent of every child who attended school in the LEA at any time during the 2019-2020 school year.

All LEAs in the state should assure their compliance with these requirements by [logging in to the Legal Framework](#) and checking the appropriate assurances by the October 1, 2020 timeline. Questions about this deadline should be directed to disasterinfo@tea.texas.gov.

- 6. If LEAs are not sending report cards but rather are providing families of all students with letters reporting a pass/fail status, are LEAs still required to comply with progress reporting requirements in individual students’ IEPs? *Posted April 7, 2020***

LEAs should make all reasonable efforts to comply with the requirements of individual students’ IEPs. LEAs should develop a plan and expectations that is created with input from an individual student’s parents for how progress monitoring toward IEP goals will be conducted, documented, and communicated. As is always the case, effective and regular communication with families is imperative.

LEAs may document changes to progress reporting processes during the COVID 19 pandemic response through an agreement to temporarily amend the IEP. For more information on this, see the document titled [“Documenting Temporary Special Education Services During COVID-19 FAQ.”](#)

- 7. Will certification requirements be extended or waived for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year due to cancelation of certification tests by TEA? *Posted April 23, 2020***

Please refer to **Guidance on Educator and Staff Issues and Educator Evaluations and Non-Renewal**, under Staff and Educator Issues, on the [TEA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Support and Guidance](#) webpage.

- 8. LEAs have paraprofessional staff that are hired to work directly with students with disabilities and whose salaries are paid for completely out of special education funds. Can these paraprofessionals perform other clerical tasks during the COVID 19 pandemic response? *Posted April 9, 2020***

Staff paid exclusively from special education funds may only perform work related to special education. LEAs might consider assigning instructional paraprofessionals to work one-on-one

with students receiving special education services either online or on the phone. These staff could also be directed to assist teachers in preparing packets or other materials for students receiving special education services. As stated elsewhere in this document, LEAs should prioritize the health and safety of students, staff, and communities in all decisions.

For more information about the use of special education funds, please see the [USDE Q&A: Services to Children with Disabilities during Coronavirus Outbreak](#).

- 9. Our Special Education Department is using Zoom (or similar tools) to conduct ARDs. Some have raised security concerns related to these platforms, and we are concerned we should not conduct ARDs as a result. What steps should we take?** *Posted April 23, 2020*

ARD meetings can be conducted virtually, and if properly configured, most popular virtual meeting platforms can do this without a significant security risk. Every LEA should make the decision on what meeting tool to use based on their level of comfort with the security within the tool.

For additional information on appropriate security precautions to take with several of the most popular tools, please view the TEA webinar, **Cybersecurity Tips and Tools – Virtual Meeting Security Considerations**, which can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/9gl0RcP9t1E>.

- 10. SHARS requires informed consent from the patient or adult student prior to rendering a telehealth service. I already have parental consent to bill Medicaid. Is that enough?** *REVISED April 30, 2020*

No. The [SHARS parental consent and annual notice](#) guidance remain unchanged. Prior to the start of SHARS telehealth or virtual instruction, verbal or written parental consent for that delivery model is to be included in the student's special education folder. It must be dated and include the name of the district staff who received the information. (Previous guidance indicated that a district staff signature was required, but it is not.)

- 11. Will high cost funds (HCF) be based on what would have been expended or only what has been incurred?** *Posted April 23, 2020*

High Cost Funds help offset the financial impact on LEAs that provide educational services to high-need children with disabilities. This is determined by costs of educating a student that exceeds three times the average per pupil expenditure (APPE). HCF cover only costs identified in the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and associated with providing direct special education and related services. It is a reimbursement of costs, so if monies paid by the state to an LEA are not expended as planned in accordance with the IEP they should be returned to TEA. The due date per this [Errata](#), is now 5/15/2020.

12. How does the Governor's order to close schools for the remainder of the school year impact LEA requirements such as sending out notifications about cameras in special education classrooms? *Posted May 5, 2020*

For scenarios such as this where a particular task is due to be completed on a timeline connected to the end of the school year, LEAs should consider the last day of school as indicated on their published 2019-2020 school year calendar as the last day of school.